

224. Grandfather Kring had wheat where Main Street is, and had to leave it to go to war (Civil). Krings owned seven hundred acres north of the TP &W.
225. Property deed from David Magee from the Government, May 12, 1853. David Magee second patent January 17, 1866 to John L. Marsh.
226. Amsbury and Marsh were brothers-in-law. Theirs was the famous feud.
227. In 1850 Watseka's name was Old Middle Port.
228. When the electric lights were put in Fairbury they had no switches, and the bulbs just hung from a cord in the middle of the room. When you came in, in the dark, you just groped around until you found the build and could turn it on.
229. There was a regular bridge at the corner of First and Ash Streets across the ditch. It had railings on both sides to keep you from falling off. There was a pond on this corner, and Marsh Park, a little farther west was no better. This was all filled in.

Horse Trades

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230. Horse buyers at a sale greased the noses of the animals to make them look like distemper.

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Frank Bell's story: A man bought a beautiful horse which turned out to be so fractious that he was going to kill and feed him to the hogs. Instead, he put a teaspoonful of laudanum in each ear and the horse was as quiet as an old nag, even standing while he opened the gate. He drove out to an old school friend's five miles from town. He wasn't invited for dinner, so he "stung them plenty", for the horse. The next day the new owner tried to ride him and was pitched over the gate. Then he hitched him up, got his family and started to town. The horse ran through the windmill, leaving the buggy and the family strung along the framework.

231. The Burr Oaks farm was so large and they had so much stock that they sold Mr. Sullivant his own mules.
232. In early Fairbury the section of the Sunken Park and through Edith Bartlett Puffer's residence and the Taylor house was known as the Commons. This had been an Indian battlefield and the last stand was taken where the Stevens Apartments and Amish Church are now. As a little girl, Aunt Emma Taylor used to go out on the Commons and pick up arrow heads, and they were just thick where they made that last stand.

233. Hi Taylor owned a piece of land south of town that had an Indian burial mound on it. He refused to allow any archeologists to open it, saying that they deserved to rest in peace.
234. The part of the Commons north of the railroad tracks was used by the grocers along the east block to dump the refuse from their vegetables. Other citizens with things to throw away, put them there, but there were never any tin cans in the pile for the very simple reason that it was before the day of tin cans. In fact, the erstwhile Sunken Garden was simply the city dump until Hi Taylor became Street Commissioner and made them stop throwing things over there.
235. After Von Toble moved his lumber yard, and that place was made into a city park with an iron fountain contributed by the women of Fairbury who gave an endless procession of ice cream socials to raise the money; and after they had made Marsh Park something more than a weed patch and had given it a band stand; the citizens decided that it would be stylish and different to have a Sunken Garden.
236. In the blacksmith shops in the summertime they had a boy with a whisk to keep away the flies. These whisks were made from the tails of dead horses and some of them were very beautiful and had carved handles. There were always one or two dogs hanging around the blacksmith shops, because the horses often got calluses between their knees and when the smith pared them off, the dogs gobbled them as a particularly tasty tidbit.
237. With every family owning at least one horse, and with a barn and a privy behind each house, not to mention the families who kept pigs and other animals within the city limits, flies were a major problem in the summer times. To keep them out of the food was a hand to hand battle that every housewife had to fight. Little individual screens were used to cover the dishes of food (The glass covers on the old dishes weren't just for style!) but the instant the covers were raised, the flies settled down; and so it was the custom for a couple of the daughters of the house to stand at each end of the table with an ornamental fly whisk (not horses tails, of course,) and keep the flies away so that the rest of the family could eat in peace. Nearly every household had a summer kitchen back of the residence where the meals were cooked in hot weather and where preserving and canning was done; for there were no stoves except wood or coal ranges. Some of the preserving such as cooking apple butter was done in a great iron kettle over an open fire in the yard. The neighbor women all came and helped peel the apples; and each took her turn at stirring with the big wooden paddles. It took over a day and when the apple butter was finished it was so thick and rich that it would keep indefinitely in an open crock. When they made mincemeat or fruit cake, every raisin had to be seeded separately and by hand, a job which was usually given to the children, and who were required to whistle as they worked, to make sure that none were eaten. Tomatoes were known as "love apples" and were considered highly poisonous. Oranges were very rare and appeared on the Fairbury market about Xmas time when they were given as presents. The small recipient usually kept his until it definitely began to spoil and then ate it, peeling and all.
238. Every family made its own clothes or hired a dressmaker to come in twice a year to "sew them up". All dress pieces, especially in the pioneer days, were used to make quilts. Some of them were very beautiful, with infinite work, and a visitor in the home could get a very accurate idea of his social standing by the kind of quilt that was used on his bed.

239. When the Fugate family was burned out they drove to Avoca and bought a bolt of calico, the only available material. The neighbors went to work, and clothes for the family were made of this identical pattern. The men's pants, underclothes and shirts, the women's dresses, petticoats and "unmentionables", and the children ditto. That family's wash line must have had a curious effect.
240. Every lady – and I mean lady – dressed for the afternoon to receive callers, and put on a lovely, usually handmade, fresh apron for the occasion. These aprons had no bibs above the waist, and were made long and full to cover the immensely full skirts. Occasionally a housewife, driven by expediency, would resort to putting on three aprons, one over the other. The top one was a utility apron designed for hard wear in the kitchen. The one just beneath was of better material and design, and clean, so that she could safely resume her sewing or knitting. The undermost and best apron was in case the Minister came to call.
241. In the spring and fall our forefathers had the mud. In the winter there was snow or the ground was frozen into ruts, and in the summer there was the dust. Every time a horse and wagon or buggy went down the streets the dust spurted beneath hooves and wheels, and every breeze raised clouds of it to settle over everything. Down on Main Street when the wind was in the south the stores were filled with a constant fog of dirt. The grocers spread their choicer articles in bins and racks against the buildings but there was no protection from the dirt. Some had mosquito netting spread over things to keep off the flies, but the covers were raised so many times that these became fly traps instead. Inside the stores stood big open barrels of flour, dried fruits and crackers where the mice played at night and anyone coming into the store expected to help himself to a "sody cracker" or a prune.
242. The old Revival meetings were really frightening experiences to many of the pioneer children. Take an Elder with a good bass voice and the boom of his "A-a-a-men", could take on a hair-raising quality. The Methodist had earned this name of "Shouting Methodists". In the Fairbury Amen Corner were Kerr, Sammy Crull, John Bodley and Uncle Davie Sharp. The sermons of the Ministers in those days were of the Hell Fire and Brimstone of Eternal Damnation variety that took on added emphasis when a chunk of sod came sailing through the open window aimed by the rowdies outside. As the preacher warmed to his work, the "Hallelujahs!" and "Praise the Lords" rose in volume, and the Elders would leave their seat to go up and down the aisles so they could better urge any wavering sinner forward to the Mourner's Bench. Mrs. Mollie Carter only too vividly remembered that as a little child she had slipped out of her family pew into the aisle, and one of the wandering Elders picked her up. As he lifted her in his arms he gave a bellow of HAL-LI-LU-JAH! That nearly scared her out of her wits. These Elders were what we now call Trustees. Only the Presbyterians have Elders now, and each church member called the others of the congregation "Brother" or "Sister". The class meetings were held after the regular preaching service and the business of the church was translated then. At the Love Feasts, which were held about six times a year, they took their dinners.

The children were anything but models evidently, during the services. The McDowell boys weren't actually bad but pestiferous, tapping on the glass during the preaching and blowing paper wads from beanshooters.

It was Cicero Bartlett, T. A. Beach and Ren Dominy who brought the churches to Fairbury. Each contributed generously to each church, regardless of denomination: Methodist, Baptist, Catholic and Presbyterians.

243. George Scriven was one of the very few men that Percy James I ever trusted to take charge of stock for him when he shipped them on the railroad. The engineers then weren't always willing to stop to let them water their animals, but George never had a bit of trouble. He just went along the roofs of the cars to the engine cab, where he dropped down, stuck a gun in the engineers back, and told him it was time to stop, and the engineer stopped.

His wife was a brilliant woman who wrote articles on model housekeeping for the newspapers and magazines, but she herself was not bothered with the details of housekeeping. The dishes were just stacked in the kitchen until every dish in the house was dirty, and then she turned in and washed the lot. Her iron skillets she kept in the bottom shelf of her glass china cabinet.

Her son, Ray, who later killed city Marshall Brown, had an uninhibited childhood. A visitor came into the house one day to find that he had hacked a hole in the wall between the living and dining rooms. He had wanted a quicker way of entering.

Grandmother Crumbaker

When the first country telephones went in, the batteries of all the telephones on the Avoca lines ran down, and when the repair man went around he found Grandma sitting in her chair with the telephone receiver tied to her ear.

She loved to listen in on the phone, and did it on all possible occasions. One time a couple of men were talking and got into an argument about a date. Finally, one of them said, "Well, let's ask Grandma Crumbaker. She's always listens in." And, before the old lady thought, she piped up "You're a liar, Tommy Stockham!!"

FRANKLIN OLIVER

Franklin Oliver was the first white person to settle permanently in Chatsworth Township. He came in the spring of 1832 from Bordertown, New Jersey. His father was a quartermaster during the Revolutionary War, and he had many old soldier official papers until his home burned down, about 1877.

He was a civil engineer and surveyor by profession and followed it until the outbreak of the War of 1812 when he became a soldier and served with distinction. He was one of the first county surveyors, and selected and surveyed all the swamp land. His home was on the line of the Danville and Ottawa mail route and many travelers who went to the land office at Danville, and immigrants going West took their meals and remained overnight at his log cabin.

He became the owner of 4000 acres of choice lands but never actually farmed it. His heirs lost the major portion of this in litigation, the last wife being Amaretta Smith whom he married when she was sixteen. She was tall, and that was where that set of children got their height, for Oliver was small and he wore his hair long. Out on his farm he was a very sinister looking person, but when he went to town he dressed up. He always stayed several days at Fugates. Grandmother never liked him and never would eat with him. She always served the two men alone, and then she and the children ate. He always took his pocket knife and notched the ears of his children at birth. Mrs. James, Sr. remembered seeing some of them.

When his first wife sued him for divorce, he deeded his land to Judge McDowell and Judge Payson to keep her from getting anything. They attempted to keep it for themselves, and in the lawsuit and howling scandal that followed, both the Judges had to leave town. McDowell went to Washington, D.C.

"Old Man Oliver" was one of the gaudiest characters of the pioneer days. He was quarter part Indian, but short and slender, with long black hair that turned white as he grew old.

His father was a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin, and Franklin presented him with a portrait of himself. Old Man Oliver prized this painting greatly. One reason was that he kept five thousand dollars in the back of it.

He came to Illinois in 1825 on his way to California. In hunting a good place to camp for the night, he found a grove and liked the looks of the place. Upon entering it, he ran into a Kickapoo Village, and was immediately surrounded by Indians. Oliver at once drove his case knife and fork into a tree as a sign of Peace, whereupon the Indians held Council around a campfire. Presently they came to get him and took him to the Council fire where they smoked the pipe of peace. Oliver was a non-smoker, but that was one time that he was glad to indulge.

It was just before the Blackhawk War, however, and even after the pipe of peace the Indians were suspicious and watched him closely. He had to stay with them, for he didn't dare move on, and he got to like it there. He and his family lived in a teepee for awhile and then the Indians helped build them a log cabin. As before state, the Indians became fond of him and the chief named his son after him, and, after the Blackhawk War, Oliver took the village as his home.

Years later (in the 1920's) the son of the Kickapoo chief came back to see the old grove. His grandfather had taken him on his knee and told him about it. Orville Oliver, the owner, had an

Irishman plowing for him, and at the end of the row he looked up to see an Indian with long braids standing there. It nearly scared him to death.

Old Francis Oliver was a surveyor, and surveyed all that part of the country. He named Saunemin for an Indian Chief.

He was noted all through this section of the country for his profanity in which he excelled. When a man settled fifteen miles away he went right over and cussed him out. He didn't want neighbors so close. And he insisted on paying a lawyer's fee with a deed to forty acres of land. Said acres turned out to be swamp land and all under water.

(All that section around Chatsworth and LaHogne was swamp. When the country became well settled the farmers dug a drainage ditch and tiled it. The very next summer was dry and some of the farmers in a panic pulled out their tile.)

It was this swamp that gave Old Man Oliver his exceedingly sinister reputation. There was a ridge of higher land that went around it, and that could be safely traveled. Smaller animals and even deer could cross, but horses and men would sink in it and never be heard of again. It was a common and widely accepted suspicion that Old Man Oliver murdered and robbed travelers that lodged at his house.

The bog explanation was established by Old John Mapel who went hunting over there as a boy. He happened to meet Old Man Oliver who told him of the ridge and warned him of the bog with an explosion of profanity that nearly pulverized the boy. (These stories were told to me by Orville Oliver, his grandson).

He died September 19, 1881, aged 95 years, 5 months, 11 days. From the "Livingston County Album".

"The ghostly shade of a man he seemed,
His teeth were white as milk;
And the long white hair on his forehead gleamed
Like skeins of tangled silk."

He gave the site of the town of Saunemin and named it for a sachem of the Kickapoos.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FROM THE LIVINGSTON COUNTY HISTORIES, CONTINUED.....

** ** ** ** **

Judge Woodford McDowell was born in Ohio in 1818 and went to Avoca with his father, William, his Uncle Thomas, and his brother James. In 1844 he was appointed Master in Chancery and 1859 was elected County Judge. He was Justice of Peace for fourteen years. All of his legal decisions were sustained or appealed. He was also a dealer in real estate and had 2,000 acres of Nebraska land valued at \$20,000.00. He had three wives. The first, Elizabeth Lane, married 1842, died 1866. In 1867 he married Marion Stone of Maryland and she died in 1868. In 1874 he married Anna Mitchell.

** ** *

Oliver McDowell was born in Ohio in 1827, came to Fairbury in 1865. He was a hardware merchant and owned 700 acres of land. His children were Osmer, Laura (married Blane), Emma (married Bartlett), Joseph, Adda, Charles, Luella.

** ** *

John Virgin was a dealer in French horses. He was born 1838, Tippecanoe County, Indiana, and came to Eppards Point, Illinois in 1855. During the Civil War he was Orderly Sergeant and on his return he farmed in Avoca. He moved to Fairbury in 1868 and was President of the Fairbury Union Agricultural Society. He was appointed postmaster at Fairbury 1878.

** ** *

William T. Stackpole was born at Thomaston, Maine, 1827. In 1832 he moved with his parents to Tazewell County, Illinois. In 1849 he went to the California gold fields. On his return to Pekin, Illinois, in 1851 he built a warehouse and to his produce business he added lumber and boating. Later, in Peoria County, he opened a coal mine and improved a fruit farm of 3000 trees. The property was known as Orchard Mines. IN 1853 he bought land in McLean County, and he married Jennie Harlow of Watertown, New York. They had four children, only on of whom, Anna S., survived.

Mr. Stackpole has taken an interest in inland navigation in this country, having written many articles for the press on this important subject, and at a meeting of the Corporators of the Illinois River Improvement Company held in St. Louis in 1857 he was the first to call attention to the fact that the charter of the said company was not in conformity to the compact of 1787.

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Charles Odell was born in Fredonia, New York in 1857. He came to Fairbury with his parents in 1861 and left in 1885.

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Doctor Sam Barnes was born in Marshall County, Illinois, in 1859. He attended Northwestern University, Rush Medical School, and Iowa State University. He came to Fairbury in 1878 and was an Assistant Surgeon in the Civil War.

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Dr. Dan Brewer was born in Warren, Ohio, in 1843, and went to Wisconsin in early childhood. He was Principal of the State Reform School of the State. He attended Bennet Medical College and Hahnemann College, both of which were in Chicago. He married Rosette Smith in 1868.

** ** *

Doctor Fraley was born in Highland County, Ohio. He read medicine at Urbana, Indiana, and practiced at Newtown. In 1860 he was a member of the Indiana House of Representative, and came to Fairbury in 1862. He was Township Supervisor for five years; member of the Board of Trustees and Town Board.

** ** *

Henry Kingman was a hardware merchant. He was bone in Tazewell County, Illinois, 1842. At the age of seventeen he made the trip to California where he stayed five years. He farmed, and was in business in Delavan. He came to Fairbury in 1874, was Supervisor, President of the School Board, Treasurer of the corporation of Fairbury, and one of the Directors of the Fairbury Union Agricultural Society. He married Mary Pickard of Columbus, Ohio, and their children were Ida, Carol, Rosey, and Benjamin.

** ** *

P. McDowell was born in Scioto, Ohio, 1824. His father died and, being the oldest, the other children were left in his charge, and he taught them in school. In 1850 the family moved to Avoca where he taught school and then entered the dry goods business in Pontiac. He hauled the first goods whipped on the Chicago and Alton Railroad. He entered the Mercantile business with his brother, Nelson, in Fairbury in 1864. He was later President of the First National Bank of Fairbury. His children were T.S.O., Elmer, John, Eva, and Lura.

LOCALITIES

Livingston Square was where the water tower is now. The north side was the McDowell buildings. The old Swarm house, still standing, in the middle of the block, was the last store to the west. On the corner of First Street was their dry goods store with the Hall above, then their hardware store and bank. Livingston Square was open on the west. On the south was the Arcade Block, still standing. Ben Walton operated a mill where Honegger's not stands. He went into bankruptcy and the farmers lost their grain and went broke. They would sell no more grain to him but he continued to operate the mill until he left and went to California. On the East, the post office was behind the present Dr. Page residence on the alley. The drug store was in front and the post office was in the back.

A restaurant on the corner of First and Main, then Walton's: 1. Millinery, 2. dry goods, 3. clothing, 4. groceries. Each was a separate store with a different front but connected in the back. (The middle section of the next block is the only original buildings in Fairbury surviving the fires.) After Walton's grocery was Mrs. Zane's. It was a house and she lived in the back. Maple Bros. was a little old frame place. Union Block was next to the Commercial Hotel that burned down. It was about where Harpers grocery is now.

Hi Ramsey's Drug Store was in the second block, coming from the west end. The second drug store, a block west on the corner from the first one, was a frame building on Wade's corner. James McDowell put up the brick building said "gossips" it was an incentive for him to marry Sadie. Hi was quite the Beau Brummell. The girls were all crazy about him. Then Pawley's Tin shop. 3. Wade and Mahoney livery barn. 4. Central Hotel, 5. Judge McDowell's Law Office (Gray Goose). Just west of Goose was Babcock Saloon. A couple of stores between, the Remington Grocery on corner. Perlees' Grocery was under the Opera House, second store.

The Blade was published in a building where Harley Bedell now lives, on the southwest corner of Walnut and Fourth Streets. On his barn site was the Straight Bldg., a carriage shop. They made corn planters, too. The first typewriter was made there by an Odell family, an uncle of the present family.

Fawknars Harness Shop was in the East Block. The Conerus cigar Factory was over the present Clark's Café. Krings used to fumigate their greenhouse with the tobacco clippings.

The tramp jungle was by the east shaft. Sterling was one of the owners of the East shaft. The gypsies camped on the hard road on the river bank, south side.

At the grove of trees there was the big hotel and Railroad Station for West Fairbury. It burned. Gillett's lumber yard was west of that.

The James McDowell home was on the southwest corner of second and Walnut. They moved there when Aunt Chloe Fugate married John Will McDowell.

Two houses were built there. The first had just the brick walls and no partitions, and the roof caved in.

Ollie Filley, who lived a few doors east on Hickory Street, was in her first year at school, and was washing her face at a bench outside the back door when the crash came, and she saw the tar kettle going up. The place was rebuilt, and they used the lumber from the old McDowell Bldg., which had just been torn down.

Katz was where Kroger's is. Taylor's store was where Rabe is now. Masonic Hall was in the same place as now. The McDowell Block on Livingston Square was sold to Mapel Bros. after the first Walton fire. Maples tore it down in 1875, and the lumber was used in the old James McDowell house.

Business was moved from Livingston Square after Fairburians quit fighting.

THE OLD HOME TOWN

(Excerpts from poem by Edna DuBois Howland,
Daughter of T. E. DuBois, Blade editor.)

There's the old town hall with it firebell,
Which holds more memories than I can tell.
When it rang out with its wild sweet chime,
The shivers just ran up and down my spine.

Whenever it rang out way in the night,
Daddy'd leap out of bed in a terrible fright
And with shaking hands attempt to dress
But results weren't so good, I'll have to confess.

You see, it was always his greatest concern,
That, perhaps, sometime the Blade office might burn.
'T'would certainly be a terrible chore
If that machinery'd ever crash down through the floor.

As there were no telephones then you know,
The only way to find out was, to get up and go.
So while still half asleep he'd rush out the door,
Never minding his trousers, on hind side before.

The rest of us huddled in scanty attire.
We'd await his return from the scene of the fire,
Then, relieved of our worries, we'd laugh and shout.
For father's ensemble was a perfect knockout.

And the old railroad station, what could it say
Of greetings and partings, both sad and gay.
It perhaps holds more thrills than any of the places,
Those first and last glimpses of dear beloved faces.

Though not expecting anyone from anywhere
When the train came in everyone was there.
And at the end of a perfect summer vacation
The biggest party of all was at the old station.

THE FAIRBURY FAIR

By
Ora Anderson Conn.

Dear Fairbury friends, be ye many or few,
These heartfelt greetings I send to you;
For every year when September rolls around,
I feel very sure you all are there.
For you, surely, will not miss the air;
'Tis a great event in our little town -
'Tis a County Fair of much renown.
Again, in fancy, do I behold,
Trapeze performers and tumblers bold.
The brave snake charmer and the snake
The gum dispenser and the fake,
The ten cent sideshow the dancing girl,
The merry-go-round with its dizzy whirl,
The air ship and the games of chance,
The racing horses that trot and prance,
The picture man that photographs you,
The poultry, the stock and vegetables, too,
The implements, cookery, fruit and all,
The grand display in the Floral Hall.
I enjoyed them all, but better yet,
Were the dear old friends that there I met;
'Tis true, each year some face was missed,
Some name was added to death's grim list.
Some friends had moved to other places,
And though we saw many, we missed their faces.
Ah, as I ponder o'er the days gone by,
I'm forced to drop a tear and sigh.
But the tear is quickly chased by a smile,
For the sighs and sounds of the Fair beguile;
And, midst the music and the noise,
I visit with the girls and boys.
I talk to the middle aged and old,
And watch the bettors lose their gold;
And gaze on the swains with their sweethearts dear,
For they always come to the Fair each year.
The pink lemonade and the peanut stand,
And the ice cream cones are all on hand;
But what is the odor that tarries long –
'Tis the wienerwurst and onion strong.
The popcorn ball and the toy balloon,
Whose inflated hide is busted soon;
The warbling birds that are filled with water,
That don't always warble when they ough-ter.

The whips, the canes, the prizes rare,
You get them all at the County Fair.
How time does fly, for very soon,
The sun on high declares 'tis noon.
And then you go to the dining hall,
And, with surprising push and gall,
You nudge your way through the surging crowd,
Then order your dinner in accents loud.
Or, perhaps, you feast in the shade of the trees,
On fried chicken, pickles, cake and cheese,
Sandwiches, melon and ice cream,
And everything that's good, I deem.
The Fair officials have little leisure,
They are busy planning for our pleasure.
The city police keep strolling round,
To see that all is right in the old Fair Ground.
The city editors work like Jews,
Collecting and publishing all the news;
While people sit in the shade and rest,
And read their daily with a zest.
The brass band plays, and the orchestra, too.
The squawk of the squawker and kids greet you,
You see fine looking horses, a few bony nags,
Good looking men and some with jags.
Dainty maidens with smiling beaux,
Resplendent in pumps and beautiful hose.
Friends, relations and strangers meeting,
Give each other a hearty greeting.
Cigarettes and cigars go up in smoke.
The people stand round in crowds and joke;
Or, from the amphitheatre view the races,
And yell and sweat and wipe their faces.
Then as the day doth near its end,
All watch the big balloon ascend.
Later, when the sun is going down,
The crowds go streaming throughout the town.
There are buggies, carriages and autos galore,
And many pedestrians that are foot sore;
"Tis no wonder, for they've walked many a mile,
But, in spite of all, they wear a smile.
Their thoughts, you see are on the air,
And the jolly time they all spent there;
So as they wind their homeward way,
They all look cheerful, glad and gay.
The day is o'er – I say adieu
With kind regards, dear friends, to you;
And though, this year, we missed it all,
We have to be at the Fair next Fall.

Fairbury Independent New Year's Address
Compliments of the Publishers

Well, here's another year! Old Time has cried,
Tally one for the New, The Old has died.
And forthwith scratches on the vaulted floor
The shaky figures – 1874.

Ah, I who can tell the woes and joys that track
Succeeding years and years of those now fallen back?
Some up, some down, some hope whilst others fear –
The rich man's merriment, the widow's tears.

Adown the dim path of departed time
I see gaunt specters of decaying years,
Their unrelenting look, reproachful gaze,
Arouse me with foreboding hopes and fears.
Youth seems but just this moment passed away,
With all its wild frivolities ablaze;
Then manhood steps upon the scene a day,
And old age to the call of time obeys.
A retrospective view of life's swift race,
A panoramic scroll of shifting scenes,
But brings to mind the swift and rapid pace,
Of life, with land-marks few and far between.
Oh! For the stream from shoes rejuvenating flood,
A draught shall vivify us once again;
Again bring back the fresh hot youthful blood,
And seize the moments we have passed in vain.
Have we not heard the cries of care and want
Of those whose fortune's plenty favored not?
Have we not seen the down-trodden sons of earth,
Neglected by the rich and by the world forgot?
Can we recall the time when in our case
We entertained the man of wealth and fame;
Whilst at our door was want and dire disease,
The halt, the blind, the naked, and the lame?
Deep, deep remorse, and deeper yet the pang,
For those who in the hour of ease have left
The aged poor, the widow's cry which rang
For bread, when of their hopes and friends bereft.
A recompense awaits us, for in His word
We find this curse and blessing from its fount –
"You give the poor and lend unto the Lord.
You give the rich and surely come to want."
But hold, Pegasus! Stop those flowery notes,
You've worked so little lately, you feel; your oats,.
Come down to more familiar paths and ways,

And work as if you're hauling carts and drays.
Ah! Now I have you; - move on rather slow.
Well the New Year finds our city "Status Quo,"
But quite improve since eighteen seventy three,
As anyone with half an eye can see.
By this remark you would infer I thing,
That some have only half an eye to wink.
I'll tell you who they are, - so far I mean
As the governing of our town is seen.
They're those who think the tax too high or low;
The streets are much too little worked – you know!
Or all at once they have some fault detected,
As to how the taxes are collected.
The street by his house don't get half the work
His Neighbor's does; Commissioner will shirk;
Those wooden cisterns never will hold water,
The sewer is merely a little dirty gutter.
The saloons are taxed too high for selling beer
Or that they're taxed at all suggests a fear,
Of dire oppression. Others call them cursed.
That they're allowed at all among the blessed.
All these are they who half an eye posses
And think the village is a muddled mess.
They measure men by a little two inch rule,
And if it doesn't fit, then you're a fool!
One sees the water tanks with wind mill power,
Given by spasmodic jerks a quart an hour.
That is if a favoring south wind blows;
If not the wind mill seldom goes.
And how that twenty feet of pipe can go
Through frozen weather down to cold zero,
Is more than they can tell. (A mere suggestion,
Perhaps the City Dads can solve the question.)
And although our streets present a better look,
They don't know yet how much tax is took;
They fear the spring time with its wet and slop,
Will find the gravel under; - and mud on top.
Their watchful wyes ever on the alert,
Saw mighty little gravel, and a power of dirt –
But hold, - You must not condemn the Board
Perhaps 'tis better than we can afford.

And then remember since the place begun,
No Board has had the vim of the present one.
Each one has honor, and veracity;
And for the place shows marked capacity.

But how! Oh how can my poor pen express
The deep disgust for such a wilderness

Of corn pens, - to all a detestation,
A monument of waning civilization.

A stranger from – I don't remember where –
Asked what those horrid sheds were doing there.
"They are corn pens." "Corn pens, h-l,
Would not a hog-pen ornament as well?"

I turned myself away with some urbanity,
Expressed disapprobation for such profanity,
And told him that at some future day,
The corn pens all would pass away.

And in their place have grass and shady trees
With seats where he might take his rest and ease,
And spark our pretty girls by moonlight late,
Upon the promenade or rustic gate.

He melted in a moment, for he knew full well
That in no other village did there dwell
Such pretty girls – such girls of graceful ways –
Such lovely forms – (no thanks to boards or stays.)

And next our business men; A word for them;
Not a word of censure or to condemn;
But praise that they have stood this hard times rub.
And if not making money, still content with grub.

'Tis a common saying with commercial men,
That no other town competes with them,
For heavy stocks, and keener men to sell them,
Not that they are pushed or times compel them;
But just a laudable desire to please,
And show their neighbors they can't take their ease,
And make their good, by prices sell themselves,
Or keep their places on the dusty shelves.

The consequence, - as might have been expected –
The neighboring villages have here collected,
To lay in all their goods, each year's supply,
Where competition runs so very high.

Thus realizing what is often said,
That competition is the life of trade;
Or when thieves fall out, the just man gets his dues;
So all you have to do is to go and choose.

Our public schools deserve a special mention,
For the strict observance and the close attention,

Of all the teachers to each little one,
To see their task is well and fairly done.

In fact there's been a good and wondrous change,
Both in graduation and in range,
Of studies since Professor M_ began
To take a bold, and just, and strict command.

The school board, too, has done a liberal thing,
By the Professor, giving him full swing;
For they well know the long acknowledged rule, that 'tis not
Every man can run a school.

We have a private school, too, taught by one,
Who, as a teacher, has been long and widely known;
Whose deep research in literature and lore,
Calls older pupils to his classic floor.

Teaching Hebrew, Greek and Latin – so neglected –
The loss of which is never once detected,
Until too late we find our language base
To be the language of a lost, but classic race.

But then he's teaching both the French and Dutch,
One of which we are needing just as much,
Almost, as English, for we hear their clatter,
Every day, and know not what's the matter.
There's another institution in our town,
With which I wish to take a turn around;
I do so, too, without fear or favor,
As I have naught to do with it whatever.

And that's our paper, the Independent,
Which, although it is not so resplendent
As the NY Herald or Chicago Times,
Filled with sensation, accidents and crimes,
Still it fitly fills the place it is intended,
Giving local news, and with it blended
Other matter, carefully selected,
Sensation, bosh and other trash rejected.

Just here, I think it is a fitting time
To mention, parenthetically, in rhyme,
The disgusting details, with which the papers
Report the scandals and other wicked capers
Of all the scavengers of glut and greed!
Of all the vultures which on carrion feed!
Of all the incest gloaters in our land,

Chicago Times now holds the winning hand.
There's not an issue from that dirty press,
But has a column or two of such a mess!
Giving minutest details of some dirty work
Enough to shock the morals of a Turk.
And just to think the dirty publication,
Filled with all such prurient information,
Comes direct to chaste and virtuous readers,
In first columns and double headed leaders.

Do we not neglect our local press?
Do we not leave our paper in distress,
And then complain we do not get our dues
In local hits and scientific news?

The truth is when we hear of any item
Of local news (and they are infinitem)
We keep it to ourselves and are content,
Until the freshness of the thing is spent.

Then at next issue we will see the mention,
And wonder why it gets such marked attention;
And say why did we not all know
That little piece of news a week ago?

Just about one fourth the community
Embrace the blessed opportunity
Of keeping posted as to current news,
No matter what the reading you may choose.
Others step into somebody's room and get
Our paper from the printing room quite wet,
And gloat in items, news and such
Knowing they have cheated printer just that much.

But still our paper thrives and grows space,
And does full justice to our little place.
But Wait awhile – a little while, I mean,
And see what comes upon the typo scene!

Our Weekly, - improved on what it was before,
Will come red hot to each subscriber's door,
And take the lead of any country paper;
Others will per force sink to a taper.

New form, new type, and very much increased,
From every shackle – every bond released,
No censorious confessor shall its powers enthrall,
Doing all full "justice though the heavens fall."

But List! Oh List you who in busy life
Of trade and commerce and in other strife!
Of buying corn or wheat or fatted hog
For want of knowing prices all ago!

You who in anxious fitfulness await
Report of markets or the exchange rate;
You who each day do buckle on your armor
To try your steel against the steel of farmer.

The Independent will be issued twice a week!
You ask, is not that showing too much cheek?
Not so, our commerce now demands
More frequent posting by our printer's hands.

To know what's going on right at your nose,
Where posted feet tread on ignorant toes;
Where corn is sold without the increased prices
Just for the want of knowing late advices.

But hold – I really had not the intention
Of giving this such an extended mention;
My main excuse, - if you bring an accusation,
Is that the presses the bulwark of the nation.

But that's enough, and merely a forerunner
Of what is going to be a real stunner
And prove to be an enterprise transcendent.
"For small bills see" The Independent.

Our prospects now, and 'till some other crops,
Are rather bad for farmers, stores and shops:
But let us be lenient to our neighbor
'Til he can recompense us by his labor.

Rememb'ring that the want that weighs him down
May be our fate before the year rolls 'round
And then it's casting bread upon the waters
Which will return to us from unexpected quarters.

And now may peace which has of late come o'er us,
Rest with, and every be upon us;
And hope that strife, from present peaceful signs,
Be buried deeper than our collier mines!

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PUBLIC

The common interest we all have in that general welfare, which includes our friends, families, and ourselves; forms an ample and sufficient reason, it seems to me, for venturing now to address you. It also should be a governing motive for appealing to Almighty God, to attest our sincerity and guide our action. The great and long enduring nations of antiquity had not indeed the light, and the advantages that we possess, but they had far more reverence for high and sacred things, and for the supreme powers of the universe.

A very important crisis is now indeed upon us, but its chief elements are hidden from the public view.

They are no more realized by many, than the depths of the ocean are visible to the passenger who sails over its surface.

The storms, the financial disasters we have had in the past, are liable to be more than repeated in the future, if narrow partisanship and party idols are to be our guides and pilots, instead of truth and experience, as shown in revelation, history, and our own memories and consciences.

In the material world, no light, from sun, moon, or stars, while enter a house without a window. So in the moral world, we may well believe that the nation whose political house, whose frame work of organic constitutional law—omits even the very name of the Deity—thereby closes itself against the light of Heaven in its most important councils.

Our United States' constitution does this, and thus violates all our professions before the whole universe of God, and places us in the attitude of a people making false pretenses. This is the view presented from the Cosmic standpoint.

But let us descend to the plane of our ordinary affairs, and there renew the examination.

Our demagogues of politics, of the press, and the pulpit, both great and small, tell us usually that we are the greatest, smartest, and best people in the world. And even if this be true, it is not saying much. And if it be true, then we will be sure to learn from others whatever will be to our benefit; and also, we will be sure to humble ourselves before the Supreme Wisdom.

Great resources, labors, and achievements, do not always secure good and enduring results; and the mass of the people seem to well understand that the results that have been won, are not such as might have been reasonably expected, in view of the wonderful achievements of the past forty years. It is true that the Many and Lasting Burdens, of war, extravagance, and railways, are great; and explain in part the stupendous aggregate of all forms of corporate, public and private debt; whose pressure in a hundred ways rests upon every individual, and upon every fiber of all our material interests. But these are usually supposed to have been inevitable, and to have many and great compensations.

But what shall we say of the neglect or betrayal of our navigation – with all its vast correlatives, evils and dangers? It is retrogression, unexampled in the history of civilization. Can mortal man excuse or explain this, on any theory favorable to the worldly wisdom we profess as a people?

Certainly it is not in the power of man to so explain it. Neither is it possible to estimate the evils and dangers to which our country is subjected by this abandonment in effect of the use of its natural physical organs.

And this neglect and betrayal still continues, and is illustrated in a striking and remarkable manner, in this campaign, and that y all political parties. A great and deep mystery hangs like a funeral pall over the whole matter, and so has for many years, ban seems to rather increase then diminish as the country will find to its cost, and as I now well know, by dearly brought experience, and to my own great personal loss and injury, for more than thirty years. The full free use of the natural highways comprised in this Great Lakes and Mississippi systems, and their connections: as prepared by God in nature since time began is the birthright and inheritance of every man, every woman and every child in all this Union, and their posterity forever. But it has never been enjoyed. And yet by the Providence of God and the wisdom and patriotism of the founders of the Republic, it was guaranteed to us in the noble ordinance of 1787, which I have so long endeavored to uphold, and which has been neglected and almost subverted by state and national politicians, and endangered by various powerful influences, and also, I regret to say, by even United States judges.

And the record of these opposing forces extends back to the foundation of the government. And my labors and sacrifices against them date back to the early part of the year 1857, when we gave the monopoly principle the most decisive, signal and complete defeat it has yet received in our country. And thus by the grace of God, that provision of our organic law still survives, though not fulfilled.

And I now think I can with great propriety, ask the people of this district at least, to help fulfill it before it is too late. They can make me their instrument to help do this if they will, and that in spite of all the opposing forces that exist, and whose power I do not deny, and do not fear.

II

And it is a burning shame that our brave workers in every walk in life, and all our most necessary business, and most useful and enterprising business men, in every line, and in every part of our country, should no longer be subjected to the evils and dangers arising from the want of constitutional provisions for a stable and established NATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM. This want still exists, precisely as it did in Jackson's time and before, and can only be rightly cured by that convocation of these states, in NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, which has so long been needed for both greater and lesser things, and should not now be delayed longer under any pretext whatever. For this also I deem it my duty to ask the help of the people of this district, or their delegates in contention. Either or both can make me their attorney in this transcendent cause, if they wish to do so. I have indeed long acted in this direction, in obedience to my own convictions of duty, but at a great disadvantage and also at a heavy sacrifice.

The opposing influences are mostly hidden from public view. They are very powerful, but they are corrupt, and can not defeat the right if only the people will move forward on the old line indicated by the founders of the Republic, in their wisest and best efforts in our behalf.

III

I am often told that I am right, but that I am “fifty years ahead of the times.” The first proposition I hope is true, but the last is certainly very erroneous, as I will fully show, but as briefly as possible.

While the evils and crimes in the name of religion, and even in the name of Christianity have been terrible, yet history records no nation or people that reached greatness or even civilization, under the banner of atheism. Revolutionary France attempted it, and enacted the horrors of the reign of terror under it.

But Bonaparte changed all that at once and forever in France, and in Spain he terminated at once and forever the opposite extreme, that is to say he blew up the Spanish Inquisition and ended its atrocious perversion of Christianity, and its fearful crimes and cruelties.

And as a man of Business and a patriot, he gave France an established NATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM, which through all the mighty trials that heroic land has undergone, has blessed the workers and businessmen of that country with a degree of stability and certainty, our country with all its vast resources has never yet afforded its people. On the contrary they have been ground by businessmen with ruin, over half the people with poverty, and have greatly tended to demoralize the country, and bind upon its broad shoulders, the vast aggregate of corporate, public and private debt to which I have referred, and that certainly never had its parallel in any country on earth, and which demands no the fullest use of all our resources, both natural and acquired, and an enlargement and extension of our commerce and industries at home, and abroad around the world.

Japan, long closed to the world, was opened by our last Whig president, Millard Fillmore, a townsman of Mr. Cleveland, Buffalo having given us both. A peculiar effort, emanating from this district, in behalf of the national constitutional convention, was dedicated to Mr. Fillmore. It was the only book in our language advocating that measure. And now, strange to say, it is Japan, and not Europe, or our country, that leads the world in this highest manifestation of beneficent and wise government among men.

For by virtue of a formal and official decree, a national constitutional convention is to be held in Japan in 1890, thereby marking a healthy advance, such as Asia has not shown in a thousand years. Thus we are plainly over ninety years behind France in the very greatest essential of all safe and practical business, the vital matter of stability in money, and only possess per capita about one third the amount of specie the French possess; we are thousands of years behind other nations in the great matter first referred to, and are behind Japan in moving to adjust our organic law to existing conditions.

Nor is this all. Never was Europe so far advanced, and in steadily advancing, in her inland and ocean navigation, and maritime power, as now. But our country, with the most extensive sea coasts, and the greatest resources for both inland and ocean navigation of any country on earth, has been retrograding in both, from causes that I have often discussed, and that are plain enough, but which can not be presented in this brief paper. BUT BEYOND A DOUBT THE LINE FROM LAKES TO GULF IS THE VERY KEY OF OUR COUNTRY. And it is our plain duty to honor the Great Design of the Supreme Wisdom, as written in nature, and apply and use it, as is so essential to the welfare, safety and happiness of our country, in all its great economies; and also

in all its means for national defense; as well as for sound prosperity, and safety against a tide of evils and dangers.

Respectfully,

W. T. Stackpole
Fairbury, Illinois
September 4, 1888